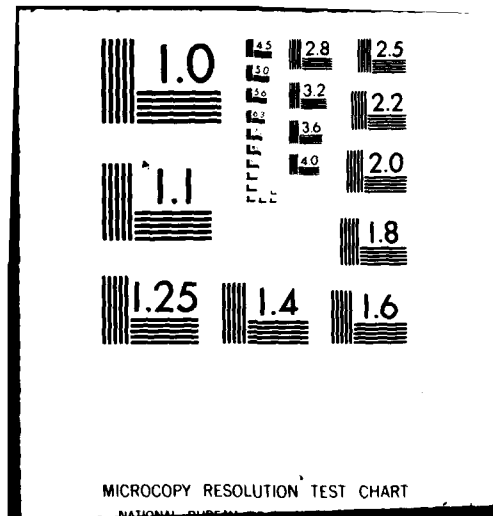


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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The paper traces the Soviet Union's involvement in the Middle East from the end of World War II to the present. It includes a country by country assessment of Soviet presence and objectives in that part of the world, and a careful assessment that conditions are conducive for additional Soviet gains in the future.		

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US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH BASED ESSAY

SOVIET INROADS IN THE MIDDLE EAST - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL D. COLLINS

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INTRODUCTION

The term Middle East and its geographical boundaries requires some clarification. There is no unanimous agreement among scholars, statesmen and writers as to the definition of the area referred to as the Middle East, and some would even prefer to use the older term of Near East. The term Middle East is the more modern term which had its origin with the British during World War II. Due to its widespread usage in recent years, the term Middle East has become the more commonly used term to refer to that part of the world situated at the junction of Asia, Africa and Europe. However, this geographical area is still confusing today because many people refer to this same general area as Southwest Asia. Regardless of the subtleties in terms for the purposes of this paper, the term Middle East will be used and will refer to that area which includes Turkey, Cyprus, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, North Yemen and South Yemen.

Since the conclusion of World War II, the Soviet Union has made great inroads in the Middle East. These impressive gains in power and influence have been accomplished through an aggressive and sophisticated foreign policy characterized by political flexibility, opportunism, and a diversification of penetration techniques. This paper will attempt to make a historical analysis of Soviet inroads into the Middle East

region, as defined above, since the end of the Second World War. The paper will consist of a brief survey by country of the Soviet influence and involvement within the region. It will also include a discussion of the Soviet Union's current presence and objectives and will conclude with an assessment as to what the Soviets are likely to achieve and the chances that they will retain a significant presence in the region.

For almost thirty years, the United States and, more particularly, the Soviet Union have been actively involved in the Middle East. It is important from the beginning to understand what the Soviet interests are in the Middle East. Knowing the importance of the region from the Russian perspective will help in recognizing and understanding the actions they have taken over the past thirty years to dominate the area. Of course, this understanding is essential to a consideration of the extent to which they will persevere in maintaining, and perhaps even expanding, that influence.

Historically, the Middle East has commanded strategic importance for many countries. Its location at the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa places it on the air and sea routes between major economic and political powers. As perceived by the Russian leaders, its proximity to the borders of the Soviet Union (especially the countries of Turkey and Iran) gives this region a special significance to the security of the Soviet Union. As we shall see, the Soviet Union has viewed this area differently from the West. She has long regarded it as a neighbouring area vital to her security and over which she has been willing to extend her influence and even her control.¹ Geographically, the Middle East has been and continues to be important to the Soviet Union as a potential area through which to obtain access to warm water ports. Psychologically, the Soviets view their country as susceptible to attack from the Middle

East and view as especially vulnerable the concentrations of industry in the Black Sea-Ural region.

Oil and the growing importance of energy sources and petrochemical products also makes the Middle East strategically important, not only to the Western industrialized nations (especially Western Europe, Japan, and the United States), but also to the Soviet Union. The Middle East alone contains more than two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves, as compared to one-twelfth and one-ninth of world reserves in the United States and the Soviet Union respectively.² In 1979, the Central Intelligence Agency publicly predicted that Russian oil production was in the process of peaking out and that the Soviets would shift from oil exporters to oil importers during the late 1980s. The CIA has since recanted somewhat on their projection. This seems to be more consistent with Mobil Oil experts who now predict that the Soviet Union will begin to experience oil production problems in the early to mid-1990s. If this is true, the Middle East oil fields will provide the most likely source for Soviet oil and as the following analysis will show, the Soviet Union has been more than willing to help many of the Middle East countries with the development and exploration of both their gas and oil production.

Following the Cuban missile crisis, the United States voluntarily removed its Jupiter IRBMs from Turkey. With the threat of nuclear attack from neighbouring Turkey gone, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean became increasingly important to the Soviet Union as an area of strategic significance. For it is from these waters that nuclear warheads launched from U.S. SSBNs can strike the Soviet Union. This perceived threat appears to be another motivation for some of the Soviet actions within the region.

While the Soviets have long had aspirations in the Middle East, generally speaking, their influence between World War I and World War II was not great. For example, Turkey, with a strong sense of nationalism, rejected the communist ideology; Iran, a conservative society, was not receptive to a foreign ideology either; and the other Arab States, physically isolated and devotedly Islamic, were aware that Russia did not have the naval power required to pose a serious threat to their security.³

After the end of the Second World War, Great Britain and France were no longer in a favorable position to retain strong outposts in the Middle East. This was due largely to their loss of military and political power and their postwar economic problems. Some argue that a great deal of the Soviet success in the region can be attributed to the power vacuum resulting from the French and British withdrawal, even though the United States has attempted to fill the gap. The power vacuum began in the eastern Mediterranean, where the French had, in 1946, been forced to concede independence to Syria and Lebanon. The following year the British abandoned primary responsibility for Greece and Turkey. Then, in 1956, British troops were withdrawn from the Suez Canal Zone and in 1967 from Aden. Thus, by 1971 the British presence was largely withdrawn from the Middle East region. Others argue that the Russian gains throughout the Middle East were due mainly to the aggressive Soviet expansionist and revisionist policies.

At any rate, as a continental power, Russia's first concern in the Middle East after the conclusion of World War II was with the two neighbouring states of Turkey and Iran.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Turkey

While for many years Tsarist Russia and later the Soviet Union have had ambitions towards Turkey, their expansionist efforts have been particularly aggressive since the end of World War II. Turkey's relations with the Soviet Union were strained at the end of the Second World War, but even before the war ended, the USSR began to accuse Turkey of prolonging the war because of its neutrality policy towards Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union demanded, as conditions for renewing the 1925 pact of friendship and nonaggression, that Ankara return Kars and Ardahan; permit Soviet bases in the Turkish Strait; revise the 1939 Straits Convention more in Russia's favor; and turn over part of Thrace to Communist Bulgaria.⁴ Since Turkey did not meet these demands, the USSR, in March 1945, denounced the friendship treaty. Turkish-Soviet relations continued to deteriorate and by the spring of 1947, they had become so bad that Turkey seriously feared armed intervention.⁵ To counter the Soviet threat, the United States, under President Truman, initiated a massive economic and military aid program which was successful in making Turkey the Middle Eastern cornerstone against early Soviet expansion in the region. Turkey continued to resist the Soviet pressure and relations with the West became closer and closer. As a result of Turkish military assistance to the U.S. during the Korean War, Turkey became a valued ally both to the United States and to the Western defense system. These improving relations culminated in 1952 when Turkey joined the NATO structure. This action served to checkmate the Russian efforts to gain control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and made the question of the Turkish Straits an issue central to the defense

of Western Europe.⁶

During the next ten years, Turkey continued to be a staunch ally of the West and to oppose all efforts of Soviet expansionism and revisionism in the Straits. In 1962, however, we began to see signs of a retreat of U.S. influence from Turkey. This first occurred following the Cuban missile crisis when President Kennedy withdrew U.S. missiles from the north Turkish coast as a gesture of good will toward the Soviet Union.⁷ The Cyprus crisis of 1964 and 1974 really marked the turning point at which the Soviet Union began to make inroads in improving their relations with and influence over Turkey.

As a result of Turkey's involvement in the 1964 Cyprus situation, President Johnson forwarded a letter to the Turkish government which advised Ankara that the United States would not feel obligated to defend Turkey from outside aggression if she proceeded with military action in Cyprus. This caused a perception among Turks of American rejection of its NATO commitments and resulted in a swell of anti-American feeling throughout the country. It was shortly after the Johnson letter that Turkey initiated negotiations with the Soviet Union on trade and agricultural exchanges and other large-scale Russian economic assistance. As Dr. Don Peretz points out "the negotiations were accompanied by exchanges of parliamentary delegations, foreign ministers, and chiefs of state between 1964 and 1967, resulting in a more neutral Soviet position on the dispute."⁸ Following the second Cyprus crisis, the United States Congress voted to cut off military aid to Turkey with the embargo being initiated in February 1975. This was the impetus which caused a significant improvement in relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union while at the same time it resulted in a cooling of Turkish-American relations. In a reversal of its previous position, the Soviets sided

with Turkey in the 1974 crisis. Moscow also began to court Ankara with offers of trade and aid and, by the late 1970s, the USSR provided Turkey with \$1 billion in credits and provided 10 to 20 percent of Turkey's oil imports.⁹

While the communist party had been outlawed in Turkey, there is no doubt that the Soviet influence within the country had increased by the late 1970s and that Turkish-Soviet relations are much stronger today than they were in 1945. What the future holds is not clear. For in early 1980, Turkey and the United States signed a military and economic aid agreement in exchange for which the United States was allowed to use all its former Turkish bases including those intelligence bases on the Soviet border.¹⁰ However, in September 1980, the Turkish military carried out a bloodless coup and assumed complete control of the government. The military junta reportedly arrested many opposition elements. For approximately 16 months, the Soviet Union avoided any criticism of the military takeover, but in early February of this year the Soviets mounted a propaganda campaign against the military government. The Soviet press has criticized the government for a "furious campaign of terror and violence" in connection to their arrest of as many as 200,000 persons. The press is also charging that the U.S. is supporting the Turkish junta and its violation of democratic rights by keeping "tens of thousands of Turkish citizens in jail for their progressive views."¹¹ It appears that the Soviets hope to capitalize on anti-Western sentiment, to discredit the recent military and economic agreement between the United States and Turkey, and to portray the U.S. as backing the new military junta against its historical antagonist, Greece. Whether the Soviets can overcome the long-standing, deep-seated

hostility and animosity that has existed between themselves and Turkey is problematic. In order to reduce the conditions for adverse Soviet propaganda, there is pressure on Turkey from Western Europe to moderate its domestic political repression in exchange for much needed aid.

Iran

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union took advantage of victory over the Axis and the decline of British power in the area to press historical Russian ambitions in Iran. Long-standing objectives in the northern tier states, and specifically in Iran, have been access to a warm water port in the Gulf or Indian Ocean, and control and influence over Iran to serve as a security buffer on the Russian border. After the war, the USSR refused to remove her occupation forces from Iran within six months as had been agreed between Iran, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in 1942. Rather, in 1945 Russian troops in the north had moved to support a communist seizure of Azerbaijan by the Tudeh party. The Soviets also supported the establishment of a Soviet-type Kurdish Republic in Mahabad. Iran's appeal to the United Nations was of little immediate help in convincing the Russians to leave. Russia agreed to withdraw her troops in May of 1946. She was motivated to remove her forces because of world opinion, diplomatic pressures, and most importantly, as a result of an agreement to establish a Soviet-Iranian company to develop the oil in the north.¹² Iran had also agreed to appoint three pro-communists as cabinet ministers. The bill that would establish the joint Soviet-Iranian oil company was presented to the Iranian parliament and defeated in October 1947. Following this action, relations between Iran and the Soviet Union deteriorated significantly and Iran was the target of a flood of communist propaganda. In 1949

tensions between the two countries reached a critical point and Russian intervention seemed to be imminent. The United States increased the aid to Iran that was initiated under the Truman Doctrine in an effort to deter Moscow. Soviet-Iranian relations were strained even further in November 1955, when Iran joined the Baghdad Pact.¹³

While the Tudeh party has had its ups and downs and has never been a real threat to political stability in Iran, it has enjoyed a close relationship to, and support from, the Soviet Union. Evidence of the Soviet support for the Tudeh can be seen from the heavy play given to the party in the Soviet media.¹⁴ It has been determined that some members of the party had even received indoctrination in the USSR. The Soviet support for the Tudeh has been especially vocal since the early 1960s.

Beginning in about 1956 we see a shift by Moscow in the approach toward Soviet-Iranian relations. It is at this point that the Soviets began to pursue a softer policy towards Iran which was designed to woo her away from the ever improving relationship with the United States and the West. The Soviets played host to the Shah and Queen of Iran on a state visit to Russia, the Soviets extended offers of technical aid with no military or political conditions attached, and the Soviets gave all appearances of conducting their diplomatic relations in a correct and proper manner.¹⁵ This softer policy towards Iran suffered a setback in 1959 when an Iranian-American agreement was signed committing the United States to come to the aid of Iran in the event of aggression against her. This caused immediate Soviet resentment and resulted in increased propaganda efforts to discredit the Shah, in Soviet violations of Iranian air space, and other forms of pressure.

Soviet relations with the northern tier countries improved signifi-

cantly after the early 1960s. This was especially true of Iran where, during the last two decades, the Soviets have played a very careful game marked by caution and at times, outward cordiality. This has resulted in Russian-Iranian relations following a fairly tranquil course even up to the present time.¹⁶ The rapprochement with the Soviet Union began in 1962 and, in a little less than a decade, included the following. In 1963, a trade and technical aid agreement was concluded and was followed in 1965, by an agreement whereby Russia provided a \$300 million loan, machinery, and technical assistance for the Construction of Iran's first steel mill at Aryamehr. This was followed by the construction of a pipeline running from the southern gas fields to the Soviet border near Astara, which was completed prior to 1971. Finally, Iran purchased from the Soviet Union in 1967, \$110 million worth of military arms including light weapons, light vehicles and half-tracks.¹⁷

This pattern of economic and military agreements between the two countries continued in the 1970s with increasing significance. In February 1975, Tehran concluded an agreement with the Soviets under which Iran financed a new paper mill in the USSR and the Soviet Union agreed to pay an 85 percent increase in the price of the natural gas she was receiving.¹⁸ This was followed in 1976 by an arms agreement wherein the Soviet Union would supply some \$550 million worth of tank-transporters, surface-to-air missiles and armoured personnel carriers and Iran would pay with supplies of natural gas through the pipeline previously described.¹⁹

The Soviet Union has made some rather dramatic gains in Iran following the overthrow of the Shah and the takeover by the Khomeini regime in 1979. For one thing, the loss by the United States of her

military facilities, listening posts, and political and economic connections with Iran (the influential power in the Gulf region) was automatically a Soviet gain within the country. The Soviets benefited by focusing the revolutionary element's hatred on the United States. Basically, two lines of strategy have been followed by the USSR; one was support of the Khomeini regime's anti-American policies, and the other was supporting the Tudeh party and encouraging them to expand and unify their domestic political base during the period of turmoil.²⁰

More recently, in February 1982, the Soviet Union and Iran signed a protocol for accelerated economic and technical cooperation between the two countries. As recently reported in the Washington Post:

The Soviets have sought to cultivate a new relationship with the Tehran government by skirting political differences and focusing instead on economic ties. Largely as a result of their isolation from the West, the Iranians have increasingly turned to Moscow for new technology, bringing bilateral trade last year to a record \$1.2 billion, about 30 percent higher than in 1978, the last year of the Shah's regime.²¹

The extent to which Iran is now dependent on the Soviet Union is evident by the fact that the Soviets have been involved in 153 joint ventures in Iran, of which 104 are now complete, and by the recent Soviet agreement permitting Iran to use Soviet land and sea routes to circumvent the American blockade of Iranian ports.²²

There is one school of thought which holds that internal unity is badly fragmented within Iran and that when Khomeini dies it is quite possible for the Soviets to gain control of the country. This would be possible either through domestic leftists within Iran (e.g. the Soviets are working hard to expand the domestic base of the Tudeh party), or by an invitation from Marxist groups within Iran for outside Soviet help similar to the move into Afghanistan. There is little doubt that the Soviet Union has the capability to accomplish such a military takeover.

Another condition within Iran which offers promise for Soviet gains is the unrest within the Baluchi tribe. Here, it is significant to note, the Baluchistan situation along the Iran-Pakistan border presents ideal conditions for the Soviets to exploit — and there are indications that the Russians are doing just that by providing weapons through Iraq.

Egypt

Egypt is a country in which the Soviet Union made some tremendous inroads following the Second World War only to suffer a very significant reversal in the mid-1970s. Close relations between the Soviets and President Nasser's government did not begin until late 1953. By 1955 Egypt had concluded an agreement with the Soviet Union for the supply of arms including Soviet aircraft and tanks through Czechoslovakia.²³ This move by Egypt away from the West and closer to the Russians appears to be caused by a number of factors including the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1953; the Israeli retaliatory raid on Gaza in February 1955; and the declination of the United States to supply Egypt with arms during the 1954-1955 time frame. The effect of the new relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union was significant and is well summarized by Dr. J. B. Kelly in his book, Arabia, the Gulf and the West, where he writes, "the Russo-Egyptian 'entente', initiated by the arms agreements between the two countries in 1955, enabled the Soviet Union to hurdle the northern tier in the same year as it was erected, and to effect a lodgement not only in Egypt, but also in the course of the next decade, in Syria, Iraq and Algeria."²⁴ The Soviets were opportunistic and seized initiatives in areas other than just military assistance and arms sales. The Soviet Union, in 1958, made a decision to provide financial assistance for and helped in the construction of the Aswan

High Dam after the Americans had withdrawn from a provisional agreement to help finance the project.²⁵ This, along with the supply of arms, helped to create and maintain closer relations between the Soviets and the Egyptians.

Soviet-Egyptian relations had their ups and downs and periodically there were times when relations between the two countries were strained. One such occasion occurred in 1959, when several hundred Egyptian left-wing intellectuals were interned. Convinced that communism was a danger to his Arab nation, Nasser made some rather bitter attacks on Kassem and the Iraqi communists. This led to an open rift with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, but later the crisis receded when the Soviets evidently concluded that relations with Egypt were more important than with the Iraqi communists.²⁶

In the 1960s, Egypt and the Soviet Union drew closer together. Their friendship was evidenced by President Nasser visiting Moscow several times, and Chairman Khrushchev, Premier Kasygin and President Podgorny visiting Cairo.²⁷ Soviet influence in Egypt reached its height following the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War of June 1967 where the armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria were crushed by Israel. Immediately after the war, all the equipment and material lost by Egypt was replaced by the Soviet Union.²⁸ The Soviets also significantly increased their advisors and technicians, raising the number working in Egypt into the thousands. Advisors and technicians were again increased from 3,000 to 8,000-10,000 following a secret visit by President Nasser to Moscow in 1970.²⁹

The rift between the Soviet Union and Egypt began after the death of Nasser and the accession of Sadat as president. Initially relations

between the two countries appeared to be good as evidenced by the signing in Cairo in 1971, of a fifteen-year Egyptian-Soviet treaty of friendship and cooperation.³⁰ However, the beginning of the rift can actually be traced to the Soviet's unsuccessful attempt to influence the choice of Nasser's replacement. From this beginning, the relationship continued to deteriorate primarily because the USSR would not supply Egypt with the type arms that would give them a better offensive capability. There also appeared to be a difference of opinion on Egyptian military plans and activities and on the approach to the Arab-Israeli problem. At any rate, relations declined to the extent that in July 1972, President Sadat expelled most of the Soviet advisors and technicians.³¹ This move was generally popular, especially within the army, because the Soviet pressure was not liked. Soviet-Egyptian relations also cooled considerably following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war when President Sadat began to turn to the United States for assistance and, to some extent, as a result of the signing of the Sinai I Agreement with Israel. Relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate even more with President Sadat's signing of the Sinai II Agreement with Israel. This was done despite the strong objection of the Soviet Union. Relations reached an all time low in April 1976, at which time the Soviet-Egyptian treaty of friendship was terminated by Egypt.³²

Egypt's move closer to the West has certainly been a serious blow to the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East. But even here the Soviets have been partially successful in minimizing their losses. For example, Soviet efforts to maintain and improve its position with the rest of the Arab countries have included its support of the PLO, its opposition to Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, and its oppo-

sition to the autonomy talks.³³ The Soviet strategy has been to isolate Egypt and the United States from the rest of the Arab world by emphasizing the "imperialist" interests of the United States and its ally-Israel. The Soviet Union publically argues that the bilateral agreement between Egypt and Israel does not take into account the real Arab interests in the region.

Whether or not Egypt will maintain its pro-Western orientation is not clear and is even less certain following the death of Anwar Sadat. While President Mubarak has pledged continued support of the Camp David peace process, the Soviet Union views Sadat's assassination as a new opportunity to "thwart the completion of Sadat's American-supported goal of Egyptian-Israeli peace before that plan can be cemented in place irrevocably."³⁴ One of the main propaganda themes being used by the Soviets is a call for the new Mubarak government to return to the Arab family. As a result of Sadat's departure from the scene, Moscow believes that, in the long run, the Camp David peace process will not succeed.³⁵

Syria

While Syrian independence from France was proclaimed in September 1941, it was not in fact realized until after the withdrawal from Syria of the last French and British troops in December of 1946. This date marked the achievement of complete political emancipation. Syrian leanings toward the Soviet Union had their beginnings around 1950, and were caused primarily by Syria's disenchantment with the United States because of its pro-Israeli policy. These early leanings were manifested by a few government officials declaring themselves in favor of a more pro-Soviet policy. It was not until the mid and late-1950s, however,

that the Soviets gained a significant influence in Syria.

A review of Soviet gains in Syria points out the significance of the Russian influence and how near Syria came to becoming a Satellite of the Soviet Union in 1957. In August 1956, the government signed a cultural agreement with Russia which provided for Syrian students to attend Soviet and satellite universities, and for the exchange of scholars, artists, and cultural missions between the two countries.³⁶ This was followed, in September of that year, by Syria and the Soviet Union concluding an arms agreement that was similar to the Soviet-Egyptian one of the previous year.³⁷ In early 1957, the Syrian government accepted the Czech bid for the Homs oil refinery which tended to intensify the Soviet bloc's economic penetration of Syria. A Soviet-Syrian economic aid agreement was concluded in August which provided Syria with a \$140 million credit and for Soviet assistance in 19 different development projects.³⁸ This was followed four days later by the appointment of a reputed communist, General Bizri, as chief of staff of the Syrian Army. In late 1957, both Syria and the Soviet Union alleged that Turkish troops were being massed on the border for a planned invasion of Syria. Against this threat the Soviet Union gave the Syrian government assurances of its assistance and issued warnings to Turkey. Egypt also responded by sending a small contingent of troops to Syria and by announcing that it would assist her against the Turkish threat.³⁹

The union between Egypt and Syria, proclaimed in February 1958, was short lived and ended when Syria regained her independence as a result of a successful coup carried out in September of 1961. Following a series of changes in political leadership, the second Baathist regime came to power in 1966 and tended to move even closer to the Soviet

Union. As Dr. George Lenczowski points out in his book, The Middle East in World Affairs, this new pro-Soviet attitude was expressed in four distinct ways:

First, Syria's government concluded in April 1966 an agreement with the Soviet Union whereby Moscow was to extend major assistance in the construction of the projected dam on the Euphrates River. Second, the Soviets extended more generously than before their economic and technical assistance to a variety of other development projects, foremost among them Syria's oil fields in Suwaidiyah, Karachuk, and Rumailan, over which appropriate agreements were signed with the Soviet Techno-Export firm in 1967. Third, the Soviet Union increased its arms supplies to the Syrian army, a process already under way but intensified since February 1966, which found its apogee after the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967. And fourth, despite its earlier record of hostility toward the communists, the Baath party opened the door to the rehabilitation of and cooperation with the Syrian Communist Party. Thus Syria's exiled Communist leader Khalid Bakdash, was allowed to return from exile (he spent a number of years in Russia) while at the same time two Communist leaders . . . were given ministerial posts in the cabinet . . .⁴⁰

While Soviet relations with Syria have generally been good, President Assad and the Syrian government have not always gone along with the Russians. For example, in 1972 the Syrians declined a Soviet request to enter into a friendship treaty; they initially opposed UN Resolution 242; they refused to participate in the 1973 Arab-Israeli peace conference cosponsored by the Soviet Union and the United States; and President Assad sent troops in 1976 to fight the PLO in Lebanon despite the adverse reaction by the Soviets.⁴¹ Relations between the Soviet Union and Syria reached an all time low during the first half of 1976. They began to improve, however, after the October 1976 Arab summit which resulted in strengthening Syria's position in Lebanon.⁴² These improving relations were consolidated when President Assad visited Moscow in April 1979 and, since this time, Syria has become increasingly involved with and dependent on Soviet arms deals. The strength of current Syrian-Soviet relations is evidenced by the conclusion of a 28-

year friendship and cooperation treaty between the two countries in October 1980.⁴³ Syria's frustration over the Arab-Israeli dispute has been the primary cause for closer ties with the Soviet Union and their feeling of isolation in the Arab world has contributed to their merger with Libya.

There is little doubt that the Soviets have a significant influence over events in Syria. It is doubtful that the Syrian occupation of part of Lebanon could have been possible without, at least, tacit Soviet approval. The Soviet's ability to balance their relations with Syria and Iraq is more difficult. In this regard, the Soviet leaders have tried to capitalize on their long-standing political ties and military supply relations with each country without running afoul of Iraqi-Syrian differences.⁴⁴

In July 1981, ships of the Soviet and Syrian navies conducted joint naval exercises off the Syrian coast during which Soviet marines practice amphibious landings.⁴⁵ This marked the first time in almost a decade that Soviet military units have carried out such maneuvers. More recently, in September 1981, Syria proposed, during a summit meeting of hard-line Arab states (i.e. Syria, Libya, Algeria, South Yemen, and the PLO), that the current friendship treaties, which a number of states have with the Soviet Union, should be turned into a military alliance with Moscow.⁴⁶ Most diplomats and analysts believed that the Syrian proposal was in reaction to recent plans for closer strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel. If an alliance were to be established, it would be the Arab equivalent of the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe and could commit the Soviet Union to the defense of the member states. Whether the Soviet Union is willing to enter into such an alliance is

not clear. The Syrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Khaddam, is reported to have said that "the Soviet Union is prepared to place all its resources on the Arab's side if the Arabs really wanted it."⁴⁷ What is clear, however, is that seldom before has the Soviet Union had such an open invitation to expand her influence over a group of Arab states and, thereby, help to consolidate her position in the Middle East. It is known that the Soviets have been working for years to build a network of allies and alliances as a basis for extending her influence into the Middle East and Syria is one of those Arab countries most receptive to the Soviet hegemony.

Iraq

Soviet relations with Iraq have been subject to many fluctuations over the years. Although diplomatic relations were established between Iraq and Russia in 1945⁴⁸, the Soviets actually had little influence in Iraq at the end of World War II. However, it was discovered in 1947 that there were widespread communist activities, many of which were originated from the Soviet legation in Baghdad. This led to the arrest and trial of a number of communist and served to emphasize the reality of the Soviet threat to the Iraqi government.⁴⁹ Motivated by the Soviet threat, Iraq became a member of the Baghdad Pact in April 1955. Their membership did not last long, however, for in 1958, Iraq withdrew from the pact following a revolution in which the country became a republic and the organization's headquarters was shifted to Turkey and the name changed to Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).⁵⁰

The Soviet Union did not begin to make any significant inroads in Iraq until after the 1958 revolution. Following the revolution, the Soviets began to more actively support the Iraq Communist Party (ICP)

which penetrated and infiltrated the government, but an attempt by the ICP to carry out a coup d'etat was thwarted by the government on 3 July 1959. Subsequently, three members of the Communist party's central committee were hanged which resulted in Iraq's anti-communist pressure, followed by adverse media reactions by Moscow, and a corresponding deterioration of relations between the two countries.⁵¹ Relations improved somewhat so that by 1961, although officially she was neutral, Iraq tended to lean more toward the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. This was apparently due more to Iraq's irritation over its relations with the West than to a real improvement in Iraqi-Soviet relations.

From 1962 until 1972, there was a very significant improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq. This was due in large measure to the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War which resulted in a radical militancy and hostility towards the United States. Soviet advances were made not only in the military field, but also in the areas of economic aid and ideological cooperation as well. The Russians completely resupplied the shattered Iraqi air force and provided replacement as well as more sophisticated arms to its Army. They undertook a number of development projects which included the development of oil production in the north Rumaila oil field in the vicinity of Basrah.⁵² Ideologically, the sponsored a number of visits by delegations from the Baath Party to Moscow for the purpose of discussions with the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.⁵³ These Soviet advances were symbolized by the visits of President Nicolai Podgorny to Baghdad in July 1967, and Soviet Defense Minister Marshall Grechko in March 1968.⁵⁴

The climate of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Iraq continued to improve following the Arab-Israeli War and reached its height in 1972, with the conclusion of a Soviet-Iraqi treaty of friendship and

cooperation. The treaty was signed in April during the visit of Premier Kosygin to Baghdad.⁵⁵ Shortly after this treaty was negotiated, two Communists were appointed to ministerial positions in the Iraqi cabinet. It appears that the Russians were motivated by two basic interests in Iraq - one is access to Iraqi oil, and the other is access to the Persian Gulf. Although Soviet-Iraqi relations continued to be generally good during the 1972 to 1978 time-frame, the Iraqi government has opposed a number of policies such as UN Resolution 242, the Soviet-American ceasefire resolution that ended the October 1973 war, and the Soviet proposal for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

The Soviet position of influence in Iraq remained strong through 1977. The Soviets were Iraq's main arms supplier and Iraq was procuring additional military equipment from them in an effort to offset the attempt by Iran for a position of military superiority in the region. So great was the Soviet influence during this period, that Iraq even acted as an agent through which Russian arms were transferred to a rebel group trying to set up an independent Baluchistan from the territories of Iran and Pakistan.⁵⁶

Relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union began a sharp decline in 1978. This rift had at least two causes - one was the execution of 21 Iraqi Communist accused of political activities in the army, and the second was the Iraqi concern over Soviet activities in Afghanistan and in the Horn of Africa. Iraq had supported the Eritrean dissidents since the early 1960s and was naturally upset with Moscow's support of Ethiopia against the Eritrean rebels.⁵⁷

Although Iraq has been a long-term client of the Soviets and has received massive military armaments, they have recently been trying to

loosen the Soviet arms and economic linkage through diversification. Even so, the Soviet Union still retains a prominent military leverage because of Iraqi dependence for military supplies which is especially acute due to the current war with Iran. Even though Iraq-Soviet relations have deteriorated over the past two years, Iraqi relations with the Soviet bloc are likely to continue as long as Iraq perceives the United States as the head of the capitalist world and as the main supporter of Zionism and Israel.⁵⁸ The bottom line is that Iraq is dependent on the USSR for weapons, for technical military personnel and, to a lesser extent, for technology. In return for this the Soviets are provided with air and naval base facilities in Iraq.

The biggest dilemma facing Moscow is how to balance relations with Iraq and Iran in light of the Iraqi-Iranian war. How this will turn out is not yet clear, but so far the Kremlin has attempted to remain neutral. The Soviets appear to be taking a conciliatory position towards Iran and at the same time are providing small quantities of military equipment to Iraq.⁵⁹ It appears that the Soviets will continue to exert an influence in Iraq as long as the war with Iran continues and the Iraqis need ammunition and spare parts for their Soviet-built equipment.

Iraq has emerged as a major Persian Gulf power primarily because it has sufficient petroleum revenues and because it has a sizable Soviet-supplied and trained military establishment. The Iraqis have consistently supported the Islamic states opposing Israel and have even committed military forces to the Arab-Israeli wars. Iraq's desire to be an influential power within the Arab world is evidence by their willingness to pay \$200 million for a Soviet SA 8 anti-aircraft missile system for Jordan.⁶⁰ This pending arms deal, however, also serves to point out

Iraq's continuing dependence on the Soviet Union.

North Yemen

For several centuries the Yemen Arab Republic (commonly referred to as North Yemen) followed a policy of isolation which was due in some measure to a historical fear or hatred of strangers and foreigners. They remained neutral during the Second World War, but began to follow a more active foreign policy after the war's end. For example, Yemen was admitted to the United Nations in 1947 and, in 1958, joined with Egypt and Syria in the ill-fated United Arab States.⁶¹ In the mid-1950s, North Yemen became less aligned with Saudi Arabia and began to develop their own international policies. Their policy seemed to follow two major lines. One was the development of closer ties with Egypt and the other was rapprochement with the Soviet Union.⁶² It was from the mid-1950s on that the Soviets began to develop a presence and an influence in North Yemen. In 1955, Yemen turned to the Soviet bloc for support and, in that same year, signed a friendship pact with the Soviet Union. A year later they recognized Communist China who offered technical and economic aid.⁶³

In June of 1956, Prince Mohammed el-Badr made his first trip to Moscow and not long afterward, in the fall, his new pro-Soviet orientation received a boost due to the Suez War and a corresponding deterioration of Western-Arab relations. Badr made a second and extended trip to several Soviet bloc countries in the winter of 1957-1958. During this trip he visited Rumania, Poland, Communist China and Russia. It was not long after this trip until a contingent of Chinese technicians as well as Soviet experts and advisors were present in the country.⁶⁴ The results of these closer ties was evidenced by arms deliveries to North

Yemen from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ It appears that the Soviet Union's purpose in supplying arms and economic aid in 1956 and 1957 was to encourage, and to some extent underwrite, Yemen's campaign of harassment against the British along the border with the Aden Protectorate (later to become South Yemen).⁶⁶

Relations between Yemen and the Soviet Union continued to be generally good through the 1960s and probably reached their height in 1967 when North Yemen severed diplomatic relations with the United States as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. A summary of Soviet aid initiatives during this period points out the significance of their efforts. The USSR constructed an airport in San'a; constructed a trans-Tihama road connecting Hodayda to the road between Mocha and Ta'iz; built a hospital at San'a and cement plant at Bajil in Tihama; they dredged a new port at Hodayda; extended a series of large trade credits; and, as already mentioned, provided a full range of military equipment including tanks, jet aircraft, weapons, and spares.⁶⁷ The Soviets also built an aluminum smelter at Taz and a fish-canning factory at Hodeida.⁶⁸

Soviet relations with Yemen began to decline somewhat in the early 1970s which appears to have coincided with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1973, and the strengthening of relations with Saudi Arabia. In early 1979, tensions between North and South Yemen reached an all-time high due to border clashes. This caused Saudi Arabia to consider military intervention which, in turn, resulted in some complex maneuvering by the United States, the Soviet Union and the Arab League. As a result of the perceived threat, the U.S. decided to sell Yemen \$390 million in weapons and to dispatch a naval task force to the area.⁶⁹

The future of Yemen's external relations is not yet clear. There still remains a great potential for political unrest as tensions between North and South Yemen remain high and Soviet interest remains significant. North Yemen also realizes that it is their ties with the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent with other Soviet bloc countries, that has given them a high priority with the Saudi leaders and has brought them considerable Saudi financial aid and political recognition. It is for this reason that there is no real move by North Yemen to totally sever their relationship with the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

We do know that North Yemen probably cannot continue to remain neutral and non-aligned because it is squeezed between the fiercely pro-Marxist country of South Yemen and the conservative and pro-Western nation of Saudi Arabia. Also the Republic of North Yemen, with its strategic location at the south end of the Red Sea, is being drawn into the growing confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The North Yemen Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs has pointed out that the new strategic cooperation plans between Israel and the United States could cause Arab states to seek alliances with the Soviet Union. He also announced that the President of North Yemen would visit the Soviet Union before the end of 1981.⁷¹ Finally, there have been efforts by North and South Yemen to resolve their differences peacefully. Following a meeting by the two heads of state, a joint statement was released in which the two countries committed themselves to a policy of "peaceful coexistence and non-interference in the internal affairs and mutual respect" of each other.⁷²

South Yemen

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY and commonly refer-

red to as South Yemen) is a good example of a Soviet success in the Middle East. In fact, the Soviets have been so successful in extending their influence over South Yemen that it can be considered a Soviet satellite (one writer, Dr. J. B. Kelly, even considers South Yemen to be a Soviet colony).⁷³

South Yemen is a relatively new country which came into existence on 30 November 1967, following the British withdrawal from the Aden Protectorate.⁷⁴ Initially, the Soviets were a little cautious in getting involved in this country and it was not until the early 1970s that they began to make inroads in the PDRY. They, along with the Chinese, were the main source of arms and economic and technical assistance. In December 1975, a year after Communist China had completed a similar agreement, the Soviets concluded a cooperation agreement with South Yemen that, among other things, provided for supplying of military equipment. From the mid-1970s onward, the Soviet Union provided increasing quantities of military and economic aid.

The Soviets have also used their satellite states to exert Russian influence in South Yemen. For example, Cuba, in late 1972, sent military advisers to train PDRY regular forces and to support the guerrillas operating out of South Yemen and conducting guerrilla warfare operations in Dhofar province of western Oman.⁷⁵ Cubans also served as air and ground crew members for the South Yemeni air force which was created with aircraft supplied by the Soviet Union. In addition, East Germans were brought in to organize and train the police and security forces. The number of East Germans in South Yemen eventually numbered approximately 2000.⁷⁶ The Soviet influence became so great that the army was placed under the de facto command of Soviet officers.⁷⁷

South Yemen has proved to be a valuable and strategic base area for

the Soviet Union. During 1977 and 1978, Aden served as a logistical base in support of the Ogaden and Eritrean campaigns in the war between Ethiopia and Somalia. The extent to which South Yemen had become a satellite of the Russians is evidenced by the fact that South Yemeni troops were employed as Soviet auxiliaries during the Eritrean campaign.⁷⁸ The PDY also served as the base area for the Soviet and Cuban backed Dhofar rebellion in westernmost Oman. There are indications that the Soviets may be rekindling the Dhofar insurgency as well as actions against North Yemen.⁷⁹ South Yemen has also been used by the Soviet Union as a transfer agent for weapons destined for Persian Gulf rebels in other trouble spots in which the USSR is interested.

Because of its strategic location, South Yemen is especially important to the Soviet Union in establishing a credible influence in the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the straits of Bob el-Mandeb, the Red Sea, and the Horn of Africa. For example, the Soviets assisted the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the construction of harbor facilities, of which they have use, at Aden.⁸⁰ The USSR also established a second naval and air base at Mukalla, in the Hadramaut, and have installed communications and surveillance equipment on Socotra Island. These and other facilities have given the Soviet Union the capability to project military power into North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf area. The port facilities are especially important to the Soviet's increased projection of naval power into the region.

In July 1978, pro-Soviet elements gained uncontested power in the PDY following the assassination of the leaders in both Yemens. The assassination appears to have been instigated by South Yemeni marxist

elements. Soon afterwards a formal security treaty between South Yemen and Moscow was signed during a visit by Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin to Aden.⁸¹ The significance of Soviet inroads in South Yemen is best summarized by Dr. J. B. Kelly in his book, Arabia, the Gulf and the West, where he writes:

Whatever other benefits the Soviet Union may have reaped from the ascendancy she has established at Aden, three at least are plain to see. She has acquired a base for the penetration of Africa; she has placed herself within striking distance of the Gulf oilfields; and she has gained control of one of the most important strategic outposts in the world, an importance which Aden has possessed ever since the early years of the sixteenth century when the great Portuguese captain, Affonso d'Albuquerque, sought to capture the trade of the Indies by seizing its traditional outlets, the Red Sea, the Gulf and the Straits of Malacca. Moreover, the Russians have learned the uses of sea power which the West is in danger of forgetting, and they are ready to act upon this knowledge in the seas east of Suez.⁸²

Saudi Arabia

Since the end of the World War II, the United States has generally enjoyed very good relations with Saudi Arabia who, after the ouster of the U.S. from Iran, has become the cornerstone of the United States interest and influence in the region. In contrast to its pro-American learnings, Saudi Arabia is fiercely anti-communist and has consistently declined to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union since they were abandoned in 1938.⁸³ Basically, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has been guided by its Islamic and conservative orientation. The Saudi foreign policy has had three main features; a search for Islamic solidarity, a strong anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance, and a pro-Western orientation.

Under the leadership of both King Saud and King Faisal, Saudi Arabia, historically staunchly anti-Soviet, has been critical of the Russian expansion into the Middle East. In the mid and late-1950s, King

Saud was apprehensive about the rapid rise of radical revolutionary Arab nationalist and about the increasing Soviet activity in the region. Later, in the mid-1960s, King Faisal was increasingly anti-communist in his public statements and charged that Egypt, and to a lesser extent Syria, was responsible for the expanding Soviet power and influence in the Arab world.⁸⁴ Generally speaking, Saudi Arabia conducted a foreign policy that was, as Dr. Lenczowski writes,

Characterized by prudence, lack of adventurism, a realistic appraisal of the forces at work in the world at large, and a desire to assist rather than to impede the United States and its Western allies in their opposition to communism and Soviet imperialism.⁸⁵

This generally friendly and harmonious relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia suffered from one serious problem — that being the close relationship between Israel and the United States. To Saudi Arabia, the United States was extremely partial to Israel and this resulted in hostility towards the U.S. from most Arab countries. More importantly, it created a situation in many Arab countries that was conducive to penetration by the Soviet Union. This same problem continues to be of significant concern to the Saudis today.

While there is little overt Soviet activity directed toward Saudi Arabia, the Saudi leadership remains concerned with the Soviet gains around the periphery of the region. These gains include the Soviet and Cuban support of Ethiopia's victories over Somalia; the pro-Marxist and Soviet backed regime in South Yemen; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; and, more recently, the collapse of the U.S. backed regime of the Shah of Iran and the subsequent establishment of close economic ties between Iran and the Soviet Union. These Soviet advances, coupled with a perceived failure of the U.S. to respond, has caused Saudi Arabia to

seriously question its American alliance.⁸⁶

There can be no doubt that Saudi Arabia is an important objective for the Soviet Union. The mere fact that she owns one-fourth of the known world oil reserves, and that she is the only oil producer control of whose reserves would by itself give control over the growth of Western economies, makes Saudi Arabia important to the Soviets. The Soviets must also be pleased that the Saudis supported the Arab position at Baghdad in opposition to the U.S.-sponsored Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.⁸⁷ The recent decision by the U.S. to sell AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia is certainly a move that will help keep American-Saudi relations on a good basis; however, until the Arab-Israeli situation is settled in a manner that takes full cognizance of Saudi concerns, there exists the conditions for a potential shift more towards the Soviet camp. One thing is clear, the Soviets will benefit from any internal or external instability in Saudi Arabia, just as they did in Iran, and the United States can ill afford another major set back in the region.

Jordan

Jordan attained independence in 1946 but the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan was not recognized by the United States until 1949. Historically, Jordan has had a pro-Western orientation due largely to its early British influence which was significant up through 1950, at which time its Army was even commanded and partly led by British officers. However, following the 1956 elections, Jordan became the first Arab country to install a "popular front" coalition government. This led to a deterioration of relations with England and resulted in an eventual withdrawal of British forces. In March 1957, Jordan rejected American aid under the Eisenhower Doctrine and moved towards diplomatic relations

with the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ However, before relations could be established, the U.S. intervened with naval forces and financial aid. Following this crisis, Jordan reverted to a more pro-Western orientation.

For almost 20 years Jordan remained oriented toward the West and committed to good relations with the United States. Problems began to develop in 1975 when the United States was reluctant to sell Jordan the arms she wanted for defense. Even though the U.S. eventually agreed to sell Jordan a Hawk missile defense system for \$100 million, there were indications that King Hussein was leaning towards Moscow for weapons. Naturally the Soviet Union was eager to exploit the King's frustration over his inability to secure an adequate level of arms from the United States.⁸⁹ The King's visit to Moscow in early 1976 marked an important step towards closer relations with the Soviet Union and towards a diversification in its sources of arms.

The King's visit did result in an arms deal with the Soviet Union for approximately 20 batteries of mobile SA 8 missiles.⁹⁰ The agreement is reported to be for the Soviet Union to provide \$200 million worth of mobile antiaircraft missiles to Jordan with payment to come from Iraq.⁹¹ According to the Washington Post, "U.S. officials admit that they cannot match the low price the Soviets have set on their mobile missiles."⁹² The United States' concern over the arms deal is evident by Secretary of Defense Weinberger's recent trip to Jordan to discuss its needs for arms in hopes that King Hussein would reverse his decision. The King has stated that his country will go through with the Soviet deal which was concluded some time ago. The missiles "will be delivered", he said.⁹³ Whether the U.S. can keep Jordan from drifting farther towards the Soviet camp remains to be seen.

Israel

The State of Israel came into existence in May 1948, and was immediately recognized by the United States, followed closely by the Soviet Union who extended fully diplomatic recognition. Almost immediately the Egyptian and other Arab armies invaded Israel and were soundly defeated, which was due partly to a poor performance by the Egyptian forces.⁹⁴ Even though the Soviet Union was among the first nations to recognize Israel, their policy soon began to change from a friendly attitude to a policy of backing the Arab position. The policy of backing Arab nationalism has paid dividends for the Soviets. For example, the Israeli communist party has never comprised more than 5 percent of the total Israeli electorate but, due largely to their support of Arab nationalist aims, have been able to capture as much as half of the Arab vote.⁹⁵

In 1949, Israel concluded an agreement giving the Soviet government control of all former Russian Orthodox properties throughout Jerusalem and Israel.⁹⁶ Israel also negotiated a number of trade agreements with Soviet European satellites which, to some extent, linked her economy to that of the Soviet empire. This early policy of cooperation was not long lived. Relations between Israel and the Soviet Union began their real deterioration in 1952 and 1953 over Soviet treatment of Russian Jews. This resulted in a suspension of diplomatic relations until July 1953. The real rupture in relations between the two countries occurred following the 1967 war, when diplomatic relations were broken and still have not been resumed.

The Soviet Union has made few direct efforts at penetration of or control over Israel. For one thing, to have done so would most likely have led to a confrontation with the United States, but more importantly, the mere existence of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been impor-

tant to the achievement of Soviet objectives elsewhere in the Middle East. To a large extent, the Arab-Israeli conflict has created the climate which has allowed the Soviets to establish its influence in many of the Arab countries. Its position on the dispute has presented the Soviet Union as the friend, parton and supporter of the Arabs in their struggle against Israel and its American protector.⁹⁷ The importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Soviet policy in the Middle East is accurately summarized by Mr. Walter Laqueur in his chapter of the book The Middle East: Oil, Conflict and Hope, where he writes:

In historical perspective, the Arab-Israeli conflict provided the opening needed by the Soviet Union to make a breakthrough in the Middle East. From the Soviet point of view the ideal policy was, and still is, to perpetuate the conflict, the continuation of "controlled tension" and the prevention of any conclusive outcome, either through a military victory or by means of a political settlement.⁹⁸

With regard to the Camp David process, the Soviet Union is using the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement to stir up neighboring Arab countries. The Camp David accords have consistently been condemned by the Soviet Union as a betrayal of the Arab cause, of Arab unity, and more particularly, of the Palestinians. The Soviets seem to be finding sympathetic ears among most of the bordering Arab states. Some writers argue that the Palestinian question is the single most difficult issue in the Middle East and has been since the establishment of Israel as a state.⁹⁹ The failure to solve this problem leaves the door open for the Soviets to remain active in the Middle East as many of the Arab states seek support from and move closer to the Soviet Union in their efforts to redress the perceived one-sidedness of the American-Israeli policy. Indefinite continuation of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories will give the Soviets opportunity for further exploitation of the situation.

Lebanon

Lebanon is another of the Middle East countries which came into existence after the Second World War. It achieved a fully independent status in late-1946, after occupying French troops were withdrawn.¹⁰⁰ Officially, Lebanon has followed a neutral foreign policy; however, from the beginning she has tended to maintain good relations with the West, particularly with the United States. Lebanon's pro-Western leanings were evidenced by receipt of American technical assistance, maintenance of trade and cultural relations with Western countries, and by serving as a home for western schools and missions to include the American university in Beirut.¹⁰¹ It should be recognized that the United States' pro-Israeli policies have been a source of ill feelings from the Lebanese and have provoked anti-American demonstrations. Lebanon has supported a number of anti-Israeli measures by the Arab states.

There have long been severe social and political tensions between the Moslem and Christian elements of the population and between the native Lebanese and the nearby 400,000 stateless Palestinian Arabs in the country. This is further complicated by three broad groupings of political parties: the Lebanese Front (composed of right-wing Christian parties such as the National Liberal Party, the Katayib, etc.); the National Movement (left-wing parties including the Baath Socialists, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon, etc.); and the Islamic Assembly, comprised of conservative Moslem leaders. The social and political conflicts between these elements provide an opening for external influences.

The communist party was banned as illegal from shortly after Lebanon gained her independence until 1970 when the ban was lifted.¹⁰² Nevertheless, diplomatic relations were maintained with the Soviet

Union. It is reported that the Soviets took advantage of this situation and converted "her legation in Beirut into the _ _ _ greatest Soviet propaganda center in the Middle East."¹⁰³ Although Lebanese relations with Soviet bloc states have generally been good, the Soviets have not made any real direct inroads towards control of Lebanon. But indirectly they have been successful in gaining an influence within the country. They have achieved this through the intervention of one of their satellites, Syria, in the Lebanese civil war. Syria now has approximately 30,000 troops in Lebanon. Soviet support to Syria can be seen by their generous provision of arms and by the recent signing of a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The Soviets have also established an influence within Lebanon through their backing and support of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This has allowed the Soviets to capitalize on anti-Israeli sentiment and has caused the Lebanese communists to be less hostile.¹⁰⁴ Since the early 1970s, the Soviet Union, in a reversal of policy, has supported the PLO. During the summer of 1974 Yasser Arafat visited Moscow at the invitation of the Soviet foreign minister. The Soviets have since formally recognized the PLO and allowed it to open an office in Moscow.¹⁰⁵ The PLO received strong Soviet backing in its successful efforts to become a permanent observer at the United Nations. More recently, reports indicate that the Soviet Union may be funneling weapons to the PLO. Secretary of State Alexander Haig has recently charged that the PLO forces in southern Lebanon are receiving sophisticated Soviet rockets and artillery.¹⁰⁶ Some writers even argue that Syria, acting as a Soviet proxy, has become the master of the PLO military command.¹⁰⁷ One thing is certain, the Syrians have deployed SAM 6 missiles into Lebanon and are using them to protect the

PLO against Israeli air attacks.

Oman

For many years Oman, a family state ruled by the Al bu Sa'ids, had been one of the most isolated countries on the Arabian Peninsula. From 1932 until 1970, the ruling family followed a policy of strict isolationism which was successful in preventing foreign countries from exerting an outside influence.¹⁰⁸ Oman had, however, developed over the years a close association with Great Britain that has continued until the present.

Oman is strategically located at the northeast end of the Arabian Sea and is situated in an ideal position from which control can be exerted over the Straits of Hormuz. Soviet attempts to gain an influence in Oman have been indirect and have consisted primarily of using a front organization from South Yemen to take control over a rebellion which had broken out in 1963, in the Dhofar Province. By 1968, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG) had seized control and leadership of the rebellion. It should be pointed out that in 1974, the front changed its name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO).¹⁰⁹ The rebels received both encouragement and support from South Yemen, and some members even received training from Communist China and the Soviet Union. The Russian involvement included supplying arms and other military equipment and helping to train PFLOAG guerrillas, some of whom received weapons and guerrilla training in the Soviet Union. Even the Cubans, acting as clients for the Soviets, on occasions provided fighters and advisers to the PFLOAG from their bases in South Yemen.¹¹⁰

Since the Dhofar rebels were allowed to seek shelter by crossing

the border into adjoining South Yemen, the rebellion took on an international character. The Omani government requested military assistance from the Shah of Iran, and in 1973, an Iranian expeditionary force was sent to Dhofar to fight the rebels. Jordan also furnished limited military assistance and financial and diplomatic support was given by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India.¹¹¹ By the middle of 1975 the Omani counter offensive began to be effective and soon the rebellion was back to where it had started ten years before. The Soviets were still supporting the liberation movement through South Yemen, but the Russian help was confined to arms and other supplies, and the Soviets were turning over their training and advisory functions to the Cubans.¹¹² Thus, by the end of 1976, the combined Omani and Iranian forces had cleared Dhofar of rebel activity and a cease-fire agreement had been concluded between Oman and South Yemen.

Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and United Arab Emirates

The four minor Gulf states of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates will be considered together in this section. All of these states had special treaty relations with Great Britain in their recent past but the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971 ended, for the most part, their period of outside protection.¹¹³ In varying degrees all of these minor states have significance because of their oil reserves, their strategic location around the Persian Gulf, or both.

Kuwait, the first of the minor Gulf states to break away from Great Britain, became an independent state in June 1961. Large oil revenues have enabled Kuwait not only to develop its own economy but to become influential through financial assistance to other countries and to outside organizations. Although Kuwait has adopted a policy of official

neutrality, she does have considerable leanings toward the Soviet bloc. Kuwait, who was the first of the minor states to enter into diplomatic relations with Moscow and Peking, also maintains relations with the countries of the Soviet bloc.¹¹⁴ Trade has grown rapidly with the communist world since 1964, at which time it was virtually non-existent. In addition to financial deals with Soviet bloc countries Kuwait concluded an economic and technical agreement with the Soviet Union in 1965, which called for the Russians to assist with the development of Kuwait's fishing industry, with road building, and with water prospecting and medical services.¹¹⁵ A significant step towards increased dependence on the Soviets was taken in 1974, when an arms agreement was concluded between the USSR and Kuwait. Two additional agreements were signed by the commander-in-chief of the Kuwaiti defense forces in Moscow in January 1976. These agreements contained provisions for the Soviets to provide weapons, military instruction, technical assistance with the local manufacture of arms, and the construction of naval port facilities and a military air base.¹¹⁶ It is even reported that the Soviet Union has made available the MIG-25 aircraft to Kuwait.¹¹⁷ These agreements have certainly been a windfall for the Soviet Union who would like access to Kuwait's excellent deep harbors and more control over this small but strategically located country. In addition to its purchase of Russian arms, Kuwait has been one of the principal financial backers of the Palestine Liberation Organization. More recently, Kuwait has become involved with international terrorism. She has, for example, permitted the University of Kuwait to be used as a clearing-house for the distribution of radical propaganda, as a distributor of funds and possibly arms in the Gulf, and as a transit point for the movement of terrorists into and out of the region.¹¹⁸ The extent to which the

Soviet Union is involved in these terrorist related activities is not clear; however, it's naturally suspicious that Kuwait has been very free and vocal with its censures and charges against the West while, at the same time, it has been very reluctant in commenting on the activities of the Soviet Union and its satellites both within the region and around the world.

The shaikhdom of Bahrain became an independent state in August 1971 when the treaty arrangements with Great Britain were ended. This small island nation is actually a city-state ruled by a merchant dynasty. Oil was discovered in Bahrain in 1932, but reserves are modest in comparison to other Gulf states. While there are some radical elements such as underground Marxist and Baathist cells active in the country, there are no indications of any significant Soviet penetration in or influence over this island state. Officially, the country is neutral and follows a policy of nonalignment but, at least until recently, it has tended to favor the West and the United States in particular.¹¹⁹ Over the past several years, however, Bahrain has threatened termination of the arrangements permitting the presence of a small United States naval force in its territorial waters. Although Bahrain is considered to be a moderate Arab state, it did join the other Arab countries in condemning the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and eventually broke diplomatic relations with Egypt. Bahrain has a well educated younger population that is liberal in its thinking and actively involved with various radical political ideas. It does not, however, have the strength or unity to pose a serious threat to the stability of the country.

Qatar became an independent country in September 1971, just a few weeks following Bahrain by also ending its treaty agreement with Great

Britain. This shaikhdom is even more conservative than Bahrain and, needless to say, has not been subject to any external pressure from the Soviet Union. Qatar has tried to maintain a low profile in its foreign relations. Its closest relations have been with Saudi Arabia and, like them, has refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.¹²⁰ Up to this point, the only signs of disaffection have been from a few Dhufaris and Omanis serving in the Qatar defense force.¹²¹ These people were quickly dismissed from their posts and replaced with Qataris. Thus, it appears that Qatar has little to fear from popular discontent of the kind that exists in Bahrain and Kuwait. Qatar has managed to maintain good relations with most other Arab countries and has consistently supported the Arab cause on the Palestinian issue.

The last of the minor Gulf states to gain their independence was the United Arab Emirates (UAE) - independence was proclaimed on 2 December 1971. The United Arab Emirates is actually a federation of seven Trucial Shaikhdoms and, as might be expected, the federation has no basic cohesion just as it has no sound economy. While oil has been discovered in three of the Shaikhdoms (Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharja), the other four have no oil and rely on subsistence economies that in some cases are no more than fishing villages.¹²² The UAE's foreign policy has centered primarily around its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran welcomed the creation of UAE as a good way to strengthen these weak political structures against possible internal or external subversion.¹²³ After more than two years of dispute, the differences between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were resolved and diplomatic relations became fully normalized. The UAE does not maintain diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. To carry out the economic and governmental functions within some of the states, thousands of outsiders

(emigrés) have been brought in and now outnumber the original inhabitants. This among other things has contributed to political instability. It has been reported that agents and adherents of the clandestine Marxist and crypto-Marxist organizations have been active in the shaikhdoms for several years but have not enjoyed much success in gaining support against the ruling families.¹²⁴ There have also been some problems within the local armed forces - the Union Defense Force. Here it is reported that thirty-seven officers and men were arrested for plotting disaffection and that several Dhufaris had been dismissed from the force.¹²⁵

Oceans and Waterways

Much of the strategic importance of the Middle East, especially to the Soviet Union, can be ascribed to its international waterways: the Turkish Straits, the Suez Canal, the Straits of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb Straits, and the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. The Soviets have long had a desire for the control of the Turkish Straits and, more importantly, for a warm water port giving unencumbered access, free from chokepoints, to the Mediterranean Sea or to the Indian Ocean. A brief historical review will show that Soviet naval gains in the waters of the Middle east region since the end of World War II have been significant.

Beginning in 1944, the Soviet Union made a strong bid for control of the Turkish Straits. After much maneuvering by the United States and the USSR, Turkey, in April of 1950, finally rejected Russia's move for joint Soviet-Turkish control of the Straits.¹²⁶ While this action by Turkey seemed to settle the issue of revision of the Montreaux Convention, it did not lessen the importance of the Straits in the Soviet scheme of things. Along with the expansion of the Soviet navy on a

global scale, there has been an increase in the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean which has tended to make the strategic worth of the Straits even more important to the Soviet Union. Starting in about 1964, the Soviet navy secured the use of a variety of facilities in the ports of Egypt, Syria and Algeria while at the same time made increasingly frequent visits to Libyan ports to deliver supplies to that country.¹²⁷ Thus, there has been a build-up of Soviet naval strength in the mediterranean especially with regard to the number of submarines deployed to those waters. Although the Soviets suffered two reverses in loosing the use of Egyptian and Albanian ports, these losses merely caused the Soviets to rely more extensively on its fourteen anchorages established at other Mediterranean ports. These events have also served to enhance the value of the Turkish Straits to the Soviet Union and is certainly one of the factors motivating the Soviets in their current attempts to win favor and improve their position with Turkey.

The Suez Canal is important to the Soviet Union because it provides the quickest access for Soviet merchant ship and the Soviet fleet to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. While the Soviet Union has only slightly over 5 percent of the world's merchant shipping tonnage, it is the leading user of the Canal. Use of the Canal precludes the need to transient all the way round Africa to reach the Indian Ocean which makes a valuable contribution to naval operations in the Middle East region. As one writer states:

. . . the Mediterranean serves as the shortest and easiest route for Soviet shipping to the Persian Gulf-Red Sea-Indian Ocean complex, but it presents the strategic problem of being blockable through four narrow outlets. If the Turkish Straits and Gibraltar are not considered problematic, the eastern exits — the Suez Canal and Bab el-Mandeb — appear to attract great attention on the part of the USSR, in its attempt . . . to establish a stable influential presence there.¹²⁸

Two things are obvious with regard to the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean area. One, is the apparent Soviet recognition of the need to control the critical chokepoints, and second, is the significant expansion in the size of the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean within the past decade.

The Soviet expansion into the Indian Ocean began in 1964, shortly after the United States deployed its first POLARIS submarines. Although none were immediately deployed to the Indian Ocean, the Soviets perceived a strategic threat to their security from this ocean area and began to acquire and build its naval facilities in the region.¹²⁹ Although the Soviets were assisting Somalia in constructing port facilities at Berbera as early as 1962, it was not until 1968 that the Soviets made their first naval deployments to the Indian Ocean. This deployment consisted of a cruiser-led task force which sailed from Vladivostok making a 25,000 mile round trip showing the Russian flag in South Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Aden. The Soviet Union has been successful in erecting ship repair facilities and facilities for anti-submarine warfare in support of their increased naval presence. In addition to the naval facilities in Somalia, the Soviets have acquired and are using Aden as a submarine base and the large airfield outside the city as a base for reconnaissance flights.¹³⁰ The Soviets also have naval anchorage on the island of Socotra as well as surveillance, navigation and communications facilities. These facilities on Socotra Island are particularly important since they enhance the Soviet Union's ability to control the critical chokepoints in the area (the Straits of Hormuz and the Bal el-Mandeb Straits).

Not only have the Soviets assisted the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen with construction of facilities at Aden, but they have also

helped Iraq in building harbor facilities at Umm Qasr.¹³¹ The use of these facilities will allow the Soviets to support a naval presence in the Persian Gulf and, thereby, strengthen their influence over the Straits of Hormuz.

The great increase in Soviet strategic and naval power in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean region was noticeable by 1970, and was obvious and no longer a matter of controversy by the mid 1970s. For example, "in 1975 the Soviet Union conducted a global naval exercise called OKEAN 75, in which the Indian Ocean squadron participated much more actively than in the earlier OKEAN 70."¹³² This exercise marked the first time that the Soviets conducted aerial surveillance over the Indian Ocean from bases in Russia and Somalia. Although the Soviets no longer have the use of naval facilities at Berbera, they do have adequate facilities just across the Gulf of Aden in South Yemen. While the Soviet Union's naval and air capability have not yet proven to be on a full global scale, they are both definitely on the rise and they are both adequate to project significant military power into the Middle East region.

CONCLUSION

A comparison of the Soviet presence in the Middle East at the end of World War II and its presence today leads to one irrefutable conclusion — the Soviets have made significant inroads into the Middle East region over the past thirty-five years. At the end of the Second World War, the Soviets were involved in only two Middle East countries — Turkey and Iran. Today they are involved in at least eleven countries within the region. This involvement can be categorized as follows: a significant influence and control in Iraq, Syria and South Yemen; cur-

rent active involvement in Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, North Yemen and Turkey; and improved image or relations with Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Soviets also have a strong influence in or control over three countries — Libya, Ethiopia and Afghanistan — on the periphery of the region.

Since World War II, there has been a tremendous increase in the extent to which the Soviets have projected naval power into the waters contiguous to the Middle East. The increased naval presence has been possible due to extensive modernization and expansion of the Soviet navy, and to the expanded access to naval facilities to support the naval deployments. The Soviets have significantly expanded their access to several naval facilities along the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, as well as in the north-western reaches of the Indian Ocean. For example, in 1950 the Soviets did not have access to any naval facilities in the Indian Ocean area, but today they have access to nine facilities including six in or near the Middle East region (Umm Qasr, Aden, Socotra, Hodeida, Massawa and Dhalak Island).¹³³ During the past decade there has also been a dramatic increase in Soviet port calls in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean areas. The Soviets have established a number of permanent forward deployments in the region which provide the nucleus for augmentation during periods of crisis. The mediterranean squadron, and in 1980, the Indian Ocean squadron have both been reinforced to counter Western navies during time of crisis.¹³⁴ Thus, the Soviet navy has developed into the "cutting edge" of the USSR's hegemonic drive in the Middle East.

In their Middle East efforts, the Soviets have been successful in overcoming the "northern tier" and in destroying the Baghdad Pact. This

she did indirectly with a strategy designed to undermine it from behind and from within. The Soviet efforts began in Egypt and, as Dr. Kelly articulates, this:

... enabled the Soviet Union to hurdle the "northern tier" in the same year it was erected and to effect a lodgement not only in Egypt but also, in the course of the next decade in Syria, Iraq and Algeria. Further lodgements were made in the succeeding decade in South Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia, placing the Russians, for the first time in their history, in a position to exert pressure upon the Middle East from its southern as well as its northern perimeter.¹³⁵

Egypt's move closer to the West has certainly been a serious blow to the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East. However, it has been no more serious a setback than that experienced by the United States in Iran. In fact, it may not have been as serious when one considers the worldwide embarrassment that the United States experienced as a result of the hostages and the loss of intelligence monitoring sites in eastern Iran. There is also the argument that Egypt, once she regains control of the Sinai, will rejoin the Arab camp from which she has recently been isolated. This would certainly tend to mitigate the severity of the Soviet setback in Egypt.

Soviet interests and objectives in the Middle East may be many, but at least three seem to be of historical and overriding concern to the Soviets. First and foremost, the Soviets view the eastern countries of the Middle East, with which they share a common border, as vital to the security of the USSR. To the Soviets there are two important aspects to this problem. First, the Russians know that a submarine cruising under the eastern Mediterranean or under the Indian ocean could strike deep into southwest Russia where it has important copper, coal and industrial complexes. A second aspect of the "Middle East's importance to the USSR is the fact that it lies opposite the "soft underbelly" of the Soviet

Union — the Caucasus — — —¹³⁶ Russia has long desired to have buffer states along their borders over which they have control and influence. One of their strategic goals has been to establish this buffer zone or to gain control over the "rimland" area in order to enhance their security. The Soviets would like to have a buffer zone in the Middle East region similar to that of the Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe. This is what motivated their aggressive actions in Turkey and Iran at the end of the Second World War, and is one consideration that will motivate their actions in the Middle East for the foreseeable future.

Historically, the Soviet Union has had a strong desire for a "warm water" port free from control by outside powers. In the Middle East region, this means that the USSR wants to either control the land mass along the Black Sea exits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), or have land access across Iran or across Afghanistan and Pakistan to ports opening into the Indian Ocean. With the recent tremendous expansion of the Soviet's naval forces and the increase in her merchant marine shipping, the need for port facilities free from chokepoints is of even more pressing concern. As the Soviet navy continues its expansion in the future, the desire for warm water ports will remain a Russian objective.

The third major objective of the Soviet Union in the Middle East is control of the region's strategic resources — namely oil and uranium. Control of these resources is important to the USSR because of their future needs and, perhaps more importantly, in denying their access to the West. The Soviets are said to be reaching the peak of their oil production and may soon become dependent upon outside sources of oil. It's for this reason that the Middle East, with its estimated one-fourth of known world reserves, is of importance to the Soviets. This same general situation is also true, in the long run, for uranium. The

uranium deposits of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia become increasingly important in light of the fact that uranium is one of the two minerals not abundantly available in the USSR.¹³⁷

The question arises as to what has accounted for the Soviet's success in the Middle East, and the obvious answer is that there are many reasons, some of which can be attributed to a power vacuum created when the French and British left the region, or even to a lack of action or response to their initiatives by the West. However, much of the success can also be attributed to the Soviets own policy and efforts which have shown a high degree of diversification and flexibility. In her efforts to penetrate the Middle East, the Russians have used a variety of initiatives and weapons including diplomatic, military, economic, ideological and cultural actions.

Starting in the mid-1940s, Soviet diplomatic missions increased significantly with missions opened in Cairo, Baghdad, Beirut and Damascus. Over the next three decades, diplomatic relations were also established with Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain and South Yemen. Even towards those countries with which she does not have diplomatic relations (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, etc.), the Soviets have shown restraint and have exercised caution by exempting them from the extremes of criticism which might have been expected.¹³⁸ The Soviet Union has also shown great diplomatic flexibility and sophistication in identifying itself with the various strivings of Arab nationalism to include both its anti-American and anti-Israeli aspects. This opportunism has served them well and will continue to do so as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict continues unresolved. The Soviets have also used the diplomatic device of establishing treaties of "friendship and cooperation" to good advan-

tage with the third world countries of the Middle East.

Military aspects have played an important role in the Soviet's expansion into the region. First, the great increase of its own military capability over the past decade and the ability to project overwhelming military power into the Middle East — coupled with the inability of the West to preclude it — has exerted great pressure on a number of countries in the region. It has caused them to question the ability and the determination of the West to respond and, therefore, the feasibility of aligning themselves too closely with the West. A second and equally important military aspect has been the sale of arms and equipment to countries within the region. These sales have been the basis for Soviet penetration into a number of Middle East countries thus providing the Russians with access and influence they otherwise would not have had. Since the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union has granted over \$50 billion in military assistance, with 85 percent of it going to nine countries in or adjacent to the Middle East area.¹³⁹ Soviet arms are attractive because of their low prices coupled with favorable financial terms, free training and maintenance, and fast delivery.¹⁴⁰ Military advisors also contribute toward exerting a Soviet influence by cultivating pro-Soviet sentiments, by influencing local military policies, and by identifying candidates for additional training and indoctrination in the USSR. By 1981, there were approximately 15,000 Soviet advisors in the Middle East with greatest concentrations in Iraq, Syria, South Yemen and North Yemen.¹⁴¹

Rather than follow a strategy of direct threats and pressure, the Soviets have, for the most part, tended to follow a procedure of gradual infiltration and friendly dealings whereby Russia, with her Eastern European satellites, engaged in "aid and trade" with Middle Eastern

countries. These economic arrangements have included, not only mutual trade but, the extension of low interest loans and the provision of technical assistance to such countries as Egypt, Syria, South Yemen, Iraq and Iran. Outstanding examples of economic and technical assistance are the Aswan Dam in Egypt, the Euphrates Dam in Syria, and development of the oil resources in the North Rumalia fields of Iraq. In the economic area, a number of Middle East countries have become heavily dependent on the USSR. She has accomplished this by redirecting toward the Soviet bloc some of the trade which had previously gone to Western countries, by making the internal development of these emerging countries dependent upon Soviet economic and technical assistance, and by supplying their armies with weapons and equipment which causes them, in turn, to be dependent on spare parts and ammunition which only the Soviets can furnish.¹⁴²

In its Middle East endeavors, the Soviet Union demonstrated a remarkable degree of flexibility with regard to Communist ideology. Although the Soviets have generally supported local communist parties, it has also shown a willingness to subordinate its ideological doctrine and capitalize upon the nationalistic and anti-Western sentiment of the various countries in order to accomplish its objectives in the Middle East. This selective subordination of Soviet ideology tended to minimize the conflict between the Islamic Religion and Communist ideology. It also allowed the Soviets to capitalize on the hostility of the Arabs toward Israel and the West without difusing the fierce nationalism with a "hard sell" of Communism.

It is significant to note that side by side with her economic and trade deals, the Soviets insisted on and obtained the conclusion of

cultural agreements. Following the Second World War, there was a sudden growth of Soviet friendship societies and other front organizations supposedly dedicated to the promotion of culture, peace or female emancipation. Dr. Lenczowski describes this phenomenon in these words:

Houses of culture, bookstores carrying Communist literature, exhibits of Soviet art, concerts and shows of Soviet artists, lectures of Soviet scholars, and Soviet motion pictures constituted just so many examples of Soviet infiltration.¹⁴³

Soviet propaganda was used extensively to exploit numerous situations to include anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiments among groups and countries in the region. Considerable emphasis was placed on student exchanges which were generally one way — i.e. providing scholarships for Arab students in the Soviet Union or in satellite countries. This was an excellent tool for the Soviets to influence the students on political, ideological and cultural matters and then have them return home as subtle instruments of Soviet policy. This approach gave the Soviets a valuable device for penetration which had previously not been exploited by them in the Middle East.

The facts are clear that the Soviets have made great inroads in the Middle East over the past three decades, and now possess considerable strategic and tactical advantages in the region which she did not possess even a decade ago. Then what about the future? Are the Soviets likely to continue their success in the Middle East?

One of the factors contributing to the Soviet's success has been their ability to exploit regional instability and emerging radical nationalism to include the numerous grievances held by the Arabs, in general against the West and specifically, against Israel. The various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict have created the environment wherein the Soviets, in their efforts to penetrate the region, have sided

with the Arab states. While the Soviets do not want a major war in the region, its obvious they do not want the Arab-Israeli conflict resolved since continued tensions are to their advantage. As long as the Arab-Israeli problem remains unresolved, to include the question of Palestine and the occupied territories, then the Soviet Union is likely to retain and expand their control and influence within the region. The importance of the conflict to Soviet's presence in the Middle East is accurately stated by Mr. Mostafa Khali, in these words:

The Palestine problem, unresolved as it is today, provides an open invitation to external contenders to bid for a position of power in the Middle East. Before 1955 the Soviet Union was hardly visible in the Arab world. There were few if any economic or political exchanges between the Arabs and the Soviets. The failure of the West, particularly the United States, to offer a solution to this problem opened the door for the Soviet Union to enter the area in an active way. The Arabs, as a result of the disequilibrium created by the one-sidedness of American policy at the time, felt the need to seek some external support to redress the balance. The Soviets seized the opportunity to increase their influence in the region. In the past few years we have witnessed the growing role of the Soviets in Syria, Libya, and South Yemen.¹⁴⁴

The Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan coupled with their build-up of naval forces in the Indian Ocean will contribute towards future gains by the USSR. These events, together with the lack of a creditable response by the United States and the West, now give the perception that the Russians have the military power to support its Middle East ambitions, and, more importantly, the resolve to use that power to accomplish these ends. This perception will no doubt have profound influence upon the behavior of most Middle East nations.¹⁴⁵ This new pressure appears to be working for, as we have seen in recent weeks, Iran has moved closer to the Soviet camp and has concluded a comprehensive economic and technical agreement with the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁶

The Soviets are in a better posture than ever before to realize

their desires for a "warm water" port. They now have control of Afghanistan, have seen the American presence in Iran disappear, and have begun to close ranks with Iran. In addition, the Beluchistan situation along the Iran-Pakistan border continues to present the Soviets with an ideal opportunity for exploration.

Even though the Soviets have suffered some setbacks, the overall results of their efforts have been one of advance. As Professor Kelly states:

Soviet Russia is now in a stronger position than ever before in her history to accomplish her ambitions in the Middle East, whether they be to dominate the routes from Europe to the East, to command the landward and maritime approaches to the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Gulf, or to lay hands upon the massive oil reserves of the region.¹⁴⁷

The significant inroads that the Soviet Union has made in the Middle East is strengthened even more by their recent gains in the immediately adjacent areas that tend to surround the Middle East region — Lybia, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. Soviet gains have been impressive and the potential for future success is good.

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